

# Commonwealth Corps Legislation

## Summary

### Overview:

The Commonwealth has a strong history of community service, volunteerism, and civic action. Continuing this tradition, Massachusetts will address its most urgent challenges and reinvigorate its civic life by creating a Commonwealth Corps. The Commonwealth Corps will challenge its members to find solutions for many of Massachusetts most serious and unmet public needs. The Commonwealth Corps will unleash the tremendous potential of voluntarism transforming the lives of those who serve and those who are served. It will also create and strengthen the bonds of common purpose that unite our communities, bridging barriers of race, class, age, language and education. By establishing a new paradigm for large-scale, locally-managed service projects, Massachusetts will lead the nation by renewing civic vitality while at the same time fulfilling its boldest aspirations.

In addition to the tremendous benefits of citizen service, research shows that community service-learning helps to meet the goal of education reform by improving student learning, enhancing student performance, and promoting the ethic of service. Therefore, a pilot Commonwealth Student Corps program will be established to maximize the spirit of volunteerism, engage students in their communities, identify the needs of the state, and replicate successful models.

### Commonwealth Corps – New Chapter 6C

- An oversight body, referred to as the Commonwealth Corps commission, shall be established by the governor
- The Massachusetts Service Alliance (MSA) in contract with the commission shall administer the Commonwealth Corps
- The MSA shall award grants to qualified non-profit and public project applicants
- Placements of Commonwealth Corps members shall be made by the host projects

- Commonwealth Corps members shall dedicate a year of their life, full-time or part-time, to community service
- Commonwealth Corps members will be Massachusetts residents who are 18 years or older
- Host Commonwealth Corps projects shall provide members with benefits, including but not limited to, stipends prorated for the hours served and healthcare

#### Commonwealth Student Corps

- The Commonwealth Corps commission shall appoint a community service-learning advisory council
- The Commonwealth Corps commission in concert with the service-learning advisory council shall establish a pilot Commonwealth Student Corps program
- The Commonwealth Student Corps shall be administered through the MSA in no more than 5 state community colleges or campuses of the University of Massachusetts over a 3-year period
- Selected pilot schools will promote curriculum-based community service programs
- Upon completion of the pilot the MSA and the service-learning advisory council shall make recommendations to the governor on the continued implementation of curriculum-based community service programs
- The governor may extend service learning beyond the period of the 3-year pilot, and to other public institutions of higher education and to public elementary and secondary schools of the Commonwealth

#### Massachusetts Service Alliance (MSA)

- The MSA shall establish guidelines for projects and activities to reform, expand, replicate and implement community service and volunteer opportunities throughout the Commonwealth.